On Mr. Average American show

Family watches friends on TV

by JERRY THOMAS

They sat in the family room late watching the television set, but only because it would be fun to recognize their Rolling Meadows neighbors.

Just in from a late high school football game, the family, Ed and Phyllis Peszek, 2207 Birch Ln., their children, Karyn, 16, Ed Jr., 14, and John, 12, flicked on the TV set because their neighbors in Precinct 64 were to be part of a TV special. Diane, 11, was in bed.

The ABC special "Race to the White House," a collection of what-haven't-we-thrown-at-them-yet information about the Presidential race, had just come on.

SINCE NO ONE "from down the block" appeared on the screen, the conversation and the family's attention shifted to the football game they had just seen.

The talk was evenly split between the gridiron confrontation and the Ford-Carter race. The Peszek youngsters and their parents had very definite views on both.

Ed and Phyllis decided months ago who their Presidential choice is to be; both are for Ford. They were never "confused." John and Diane are the only Jimmy Carter supporters in the family.

The Peszeks are different from their neighbor Richard Johnson, 2402 Willow Ln., "the average American" and star of the ABC show they were watching. Four years ago a public affairs center decided Johnson represented the typical American.

EARLIER IN the Presidential campaign Johnson confessed to being "confused" and only recently decided he's a Ford man.

"I'm a Democrat, but I'll vote for Ford," boomed Johnson's voice from the set.

His wife, Mary Ann, then announced she'd switched her support from Ford to Carter.

"Hey, I'm for Ford too," said Ed "This is the Rolling Meadows part. Let's watch it."

As the family gathered around, Phyllis said, "I'm for Ford, too. Not because I'm so for Ford as that I'm against Carter.

"I wouldn't mind a change, but not to Carter; he's just too new," she said emphatically.

AFTER THE Johnson segment, the television showed the neat homes on Central, Willow and Birch streets in Elk Grove Townsnip.

The Peszeks didn't wait for a commercial break before leaving the set. ABC may have spent a bundle on the "Race to the White House," but for Ed and Phyllis, their youngster's opinions were more interesting.

"Look, I'm tired of all this stuff on TV. I know who I'm voting for. I don't care how those others vote," Ed said. "How about you kids; what do you think about it?"

Karyn, still in her pom-pon outfit, took time out to pop a pizza in the oven. Back again she checked to see if Rolling Meadows High School had been shown on TV. Camera crews had spent hours filming there the previous weekend.

"Nope, not on yet," she said. "I'm for Ford like you and mom, daddy. And most of us at school are for Ford, too. Except this one girl who is so for Carter she — she — she — she — oh, she just gets yelled at by the other kids," she said.

"Mostly, we mistrust him (Carter), but I don't know why," Karyn said.

THEN A SHOT of the high school cafeteria caught her attention on the television, and she pointed out friends to her family.

The Peszeks then lost interest in the program until the results of a precinct poll, taken by Harper College students at the same time as the Johnson's were being filmed, was announced.

The Peszeks were not part of the survey. "Heck, we never even see a precinct captain or worker in this neighborhood," complained Ed. "When we lived in Cicero 11 years ago they sure knew when to come around."

Molly Waite, assistant professor of political science at Harper, came on screen to talk about how the 301 people her students polled will vote.

ACCORDING TO the poll, 144 persons in Precinct 64 will vote for Ford; 70 persons will vote for Jimmy Carter and 71 are undecided.

Of those 71 undecided voters, 40 said they were leaning towards Ford and 12 said they were favoring Carter. Miss Waite said 16 persons were voting for someone other than Ford or Carter.

After the survey results were finished and "The Race to the White House" had gone off the air, Ed hopped off the couch and flicked the station selector to a Halloween horror show "The Snake Woman."